



RCB SPIRITUAL FORMATION GUIDE | MARCH 2023

An introduction to *Slow. Steady. Faith.* These guides are designed to help you take **the next small step** toward spiritual flourishing. When it comes to growth in our walks with God, many of us get stuck because we don't know where to start, we struggle to make space for life-giving practices amid our busyness, or we set ambitious goals that are too hard to follow through on in our current season of life.

The heart behind *Slow. Steady. Faith.* is to **focus on and celebrate taking small steps toward God**—by seeking His presence, imitating His character, and mirroring His love and goodness to those around us.

As you read this month's guide, ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate **the practice** (what to do) and **the rhythm** (when and how often to do it) that will be most helpful to you. Remember, these practices are not rungs on a ladder where the goal is to climb higher by doing "more." Rather, they are meant to be simple ways to shape your life so that God is increasingly placed at the center. This means that in a busy season a once-a-month practice can provide as much value as a daily practice might in a more spacious season—the Holy Spirit can use either to infuse more of God's abundant life into your life.

To make the most of this guide, set aside time at the start of each month to pray over these questions:

- ❖ **Which practice is standing out to me?** How might God be answering a prayer or calling me into a deeper relationship with Him by inviting me into this practice?
- ❖ **How can I make this practice part of my everyday life?** Are there steps of preparation I need to take to clear time and space for this? Do I already have a regular rhythm that I can incorporate this practice into?
- ❖ **What does it look like to take *slow, steady steps* toward this practice?** During a busy or emotionally weighty season, you may want to make the practice "smaller"—for instance, instead of a daily rhythm, consider twice a week. During a spacious or growth-oriented season, you may want to pick a practice/ rhythm that will stretch you by devoting more of your time, energy, or resources to it—for instance, instead of setting aside 15 minutes for a practice, try 30 or 45.

Remember to make prayer a part of every practice. Some guides will focus more on our personal relationship with God while others will call us to engage more with our community. Approach each practice as an invitation to draw near to God and lift up words of praise, petition, repentance, and thanksgiving as you go.

Lastly, remember that God celebrates the small and faithful (Mark 12:41-44). By taking the next small step that is within reach today, you are planting a seed of faith, trusting God to nourish it and cause it to expand and flourish (Luke 13:18-19). As we engage in these practices, may Jesus be glorified and may we find that when we draw near to God, He is faithful to meet us there (James 4:8).

Creating Space for... Fasting and Generosity



During Lent, our themes will focus on “creating space” for different rhythms that lend themselves to this season. In observing Lent, we imitate Jesus in his forty days of resisting temptation and prayer in the wilderness. Lent is a time to restore vibrancy and vision in our walks with God through a renewed focus on spiritual practices.

In March, we will focus on **fasting** and **generosity**. These elements are paired together to show how self-denial as a spiritual practice is intended to create space for something else. Fasting from a meal or certain spending habits can make us more aware of our impulses and help us turn to God for the sustenance we need. Fasting can also free up resources we can use to bless others through God’s guidance. As you begin your fast, pray for the Lord to stir up a greater spiritual hunger in you and ask him to guide you in how to be generous toward others this month.



Practice: Designate a period of time where you fast from meals or a specific spending habit. Keep track of the money you save and prayerfully consider how you can use it to be generous to others.

Rhythm: Pick one day each week to fast from meals (or a single meal) or choose a spending habit to set aside on specific days or even the whole month (buying lunch out, buying coffee, paying for streaming subscriptions/entertainment, etc).



Fasting from Food | Set aside one day each week to fast from meals.

- ❖ **Fasting:** Prayerfully consider the type of fast to practice, factoring in health and personal circumstances while also pressing into the challenge of abstinence. Options include water only, water and juice only (no solid food), or limited foods (e.g. fruits and vegetables only).
- ❖ **Filling:** Set aside time during your fast to reflect on Isaiah 58:6-8. Pray for God to meet you in your hunger and cultivate a deeper desire to be formed in the character of Jesus.



Fasting from Spending | Set aside a designated time to “fast” from a spending habit

- ❖ **Fasting:** Consider an area where you can limit your weekly spending. Options include making a simple lunch instead of eating out, skipping your daily coffee order, suspending streaming subscription/entertainment, or giving up another non-essential purchase.
- ❖ **Filling:** Use the money saved to increase your generosity toward others. Reflect on 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 and pray for God to guide you in giving cheerfully. If you are looking for a charitable organization, consider [Haley House](#), our neighbors in the South End.



Other Tips:

- ❖ **Consistency:** If your fast is weekly, consider fasting on the same day every week.
- ❖ **Community:** Coordinate with your community (CG, etc.) to fast together on the same day and set aside time to share your reflections on this experience. Consider seeking accountability by telling others what you want to fast from or be generous toward and giving your community permission to ask you about it and encourage you during this month.
- ❖ **Intentionality:** Plan in advance the steps you will need to take to make the fast possible. What timeline best fits the fast that you are considering? Are there visual cues you can remove to make abstaining easier? Are there rhythms, such as prayer or Bible reading, you can plan out to make your time of fasting focused and intentional?